Import of Basmati Rice from Pakistan

456. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian traders are importing basmati rice from Pakistan;

(b) if so, the details of the quantity being imported and at what rates;

(c) whether Government are aware of the strong resentment of Indian farmers over the said import which is adversely affecting them; and

(d) if so, the remedial steps proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

आस्ट्रेलिया से गेहूं का आयात

457. **श्री रामजीलाल:** क्या वाणिज्य मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:-

(क) क्या यह सच है कि राज्य व्यापार निगम द्वारा फरवरी, 1998 में आस्ट्रेलिया से 15 लाख टन गेहूं का आयात किया गया था;

(ख) यदि हां, तो गेहूं के आयात की अनुमति कब दी गई तथा इस आयात के संबंध में कितनी विदेशी मुद्रा व्यय की गई;

(ग) क्या इस प्रयोजनार्थ अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर निविदाएं आमंत्रित की गई थीं;

(घ) यदि हां, तो किस-किस देश से और उन्होंने क्या-क्या दरें उद्धृत की थीं;

(ङ) क्या यह भी सच है कि भारतीय खाद्य निगम के साथ-साथ खाद्य मंत्रालय ने भी उक्त आयात का विरोध किया था; और

(च) इस पर सरकार की प्रतिक्रिया क्या है?

वाणिज्य मंत्री (श्री रामकृष्ण हेगड़े): (क) जी, हां। एस टी सी ने फरवरी, 1998 में आस्ट्रेलिया से 1.5 मिलियन मी.टन. 5% आस्ट्रेलियन स्टेन्डर्ड सफेद गेहूं के 142.50 प्रति मी.टन अमरीकी डालर के एफ ओ बी मूल्य पर आयात की संविदा की है।

(ख) गेहूं का आयात का अधिकार जनवरी-फरवरी, 98 के दौरान सरकार ने दिया था। एफ ओ बी लागत के रूप में लगभग 214.0 मिलियन अमरीकी डालर विदेशी मुद्रा व्यय की गई थी। इसके अलावा, विदेशी जहाज का भाड़ा विदेशी मुद्रा में देय है।

(ग) व (घ) जी हां। एस टी सी की दिनांक 21.2.98 की निविदा आस्ट्रेलियन गेहूं बोर्ड सहित विश्व बाजार के गेहूं के अग्रणी आपूर्तिकर्त्राओं को जारी की गई थी। यू एस ए, कनाडा और आस्ट्रेलिया मूल के गेहूं की आपूर्ति के लिए कनाडियन गेहूं बोर्ड और अन्य अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मूल के गेहूं की आपूर्ति के लिए कनाडियन गेहूं बोर्ड और अन्य अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय प्रख्यात गेहूं व्यापारियों के प्रस्ताव आमंत्रित किए गए। कृषि मंत्रालय द्वारा निर्धारित गुण्वत्ता मानदंडों का अनुपालन किया गया था। अनुमानित सी एंड एफ लागत सहित विविध देशों से प्राप्त प्रस्तावों को दर्शाने वाला एक विवरण संलग्न है। (देखिए) परिशिष्ट 184 अनुपत्र संख्या 18।

(ङ) जी, नहीं।

(च) प्रश्न नहीं उठता।

Phased Reduction Import Restriction

458. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has put forth in the World Trade Organisation for a phased programme of eliminating its import restrictions;

(b) the reaction of the industrialised countries thereon; and

(c) the strategy of compromise proposed by India?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) Under the exceptional provisions of Article XVIII of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994, India has some residual quantitative restrictions on imports maintained for balance of payment purposes. In May 1997, India presented to the World Trade Organization (WTO) a plan for the elimination of these restrictions on imports. The plan envisaged the elimination of these restrictions in a time schedule of nine years in three phases, each of three years, starting from 1st April 1997. This plan was considered at the consultations with India in the WTO Committee on Balance of Payments Restrictions in June-July 1997, when all the Members of the Committee accepted the principle of a phased removal of the restrictions, but expressed different opinions on the length

of the phase-out period. India offered to reduce the schedule to seven years, which was accepted by the majority of the Members of the Committee but the meeting concluded without consensus. During formal bilateral consultations held under the dispute settlement mechanism, India reached a mutually satisfactory solution each with Australia, Canada the European Communities, New Zealand and Switzerland, as well as with Japan which was a third party to the disputes, on a time schedule of six years with three consecutive phases of 3 years, 2 years and one year, for the removal of import restrictions in a balanced manner within each phase. Settlement has not been reached only with the United States and at its request at a dispute settlement panel has been constituted in the WTO to examine the US allegation that the continued maintenance of quantitative restrictions on imports by India is inconsistent with India's obligations under the WTO agreements. The dispute settlement panel proceeding are presently underway.

Indian's Automobile Policy at WTO

459. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India will defence Japan's challenge to its auto policy at the World Trade Organisation;

(b) if so, the strategy proposed; and

(c) the diplomatic negotiations in this regard to assert India's interest?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) The issue of India's auto policy was raised during the Trade Policy Review at the WTO by Japan and the rationale behind the Auto Policy was explained by India. Japan has not yet raised any formal dispute at the WTO.

Visit by German Trade Delegations

460. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some German trade delegations propose to visit India this year;

(b) if so, whether any preliminary discussions have been held by Government;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the areas in which the German industrialists propose to trade with India?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) There are informal indications that some business delegations from Germany might visit India in the coming months. Indian Missions in Germany remain in contact with various German agencies for providing any information/held in this regard.

(d) German industrialists are interested in trade with India in several sectors. The major items of Indian exports to Germany include textiles and garments, chemicals, gems and jewellery, leather manufacturers, handicrafts etc. Major items of German exports to India are machinery, project goods, iron and steel, manufacturers of metals, professional instruments, artificial resins, plastic materials etc.

Preliminary Assessment of Import-Export Policy

461. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA:
SHRI RAJ NATH SINGH:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have made any preliminary assessment of the import-export policy modifications introduced in April, 1998;

(b) if so, the conclusions tentatively arrived at; and

(c) the follow-up action taken/contemplated, if any?

THE MINISTER OF COMMCERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) The revised EXIM policy was notified on 13.04.98. Various Export Promotion Councils/Apex Chambers of Commerce and individual exporters have, since then, conveyed their views/suggestions on different aspects of the new/amended provisions of the EXIM Policy. Many of these have been examined and appropriate modifications have been carried out in the Policy provisions, wherever it was felt necessary. The EXIM Policy review is an ongoing exercise and changes are made as and when it is considered necessary.